

the Germans would never expect a frontal advance on so formidable a position, and would therefore place their reserves opposite more vulnerable sectors of their line. The progress made, even in an attack which had been anticipated and provided against for two months, proved that Nivelle's calculation was not altogether ill-founded. Had this stronghold been captured, Laon was within Nivelle's grasp and the German line would have at last been turned. But

what possessed him to persist after the *Why did* secret had been given away, and the *persist?* element of surprise upon which he relied

had completely disappeared? There is but one answer. These great offensives, once they fired the imagination of a Commander, ceased to be plans for the winning of victory. They became a passion which could not be resisted. Like all passions which possess men, this one banished caution, prudence and fear. The more Joffre, Nivelle and Haig were criticised and opposed, the more fierce became their appetite for their cherished plans. They ignored difficulties, they concealed and suppressed disagreeable facts, even from themselves.

We shall see this dementation once more at work when Passchendaele is reached in the course of my narrative. The plan becomes an intoxication and the intoxication a delirium. When the craving is on him the plan-crazed maniac is blind.

General Nivelle
in December was a cool and
competent
A gambler's planner. By April he had become
a
plunge crazy plunger. We have
witnessed this
process many a time among
erring
business men who, in a successful,
honourable career,
have won repute for circumspection and
prudence.
If they are confronted with an
unexpected check in